

Economic Development Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2008

Present: Art Siciliano, George Malette, Heleen Kurk

Absent: Liz McSweeney

Recording Secretary: Heleen Kurk

Guests: Ricia Velasco, David Preece, Bill Sirak, Richard Butt

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. Vice Chairman, Art Siciliano appointed George Malette to sit in as a full member for the meeting.

There was one correction in the minutes of October 21, 2008. In the third paragraph the name Jim should have been Art. Art moved, George seconded to accept the minutes of October 21, 2008 as amended. All were in favor.

David Preece, director of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission, was invited to attend our meeting. He brought along Bill Sirek who is chairman of the Hooksett economic development committee and Ricia Velasco from DRED to share with the Committee their knowledge, suggestions and information concerning economic development. Mr. Preece first asked the Committee what has been done over the years. The committee shared that in the past there was a town center committee (a separate committee), there had been a charette and there have been public meetings to hear what citizens want as far as economic development goes. These things are spelled out in our master plan. Some of those things have been accomplished.

A problem that Weare faces is that much of its working population works outside of Weare. We need to reevaluate where the town is at and what our goals should be. Some businesses just haven't worked in Weare. Weare doesn't have a major highway, which could bring traffic that could help to support some businesses.

We can try to increase tourism. The work being done on the Scenic By Way, which will pass through Goffstown, New Boston, Weare and Dunbarton, might help.

We shared that we have 5 designated villages and one historic district as well as an industrial park. We are in the process of inventorying and mapping out where we have businesses and then sharing that with the voters.

Discussion about how the Economic Development Committee was formed (by the Board of Selectmen) and what authority it has. There seems to be a problem with the committee being reactive rather than proactive.

Bill Sirak gave us a background of the Hooksett economic development committee; it's problems and goals. He stressed that you need to have a good relationship with the Board of Selectmen, identify why and what is needed, take a look at the composition of the committee, and that you need a strategic plan with the town administrator and town planner involved. (We have no town planner)

Art brought forward that businesses need to look good and that we have a hard time attracting businesses. This year we are focusing on establishing the inventory map. It was suggested that after the map is done we should contact each of the businesses and concentrate on existing businesses with "how can

we help you?" It was suggested that we might develop an "Ambassador Club" which would visit business to check in with them and see what they need.

Ricia Velasco gave the committee handouts from DRED and spoke about grants for economic development and businesses. She spoke about mixed use and that a healthy village is one that is sustainable and walk able which would bring more employment into the center of town.

Mr. Preece suggested that we rethink tourism because of the Scenic by Way. Economic Development could be the facilitator and work with Goffstown, New Boston, and Dunbarton. Businesses to consider would be restaurants, bed and breakfasts and events that would draw people to town. We need to promote ideas and advertise opportunities. Bring key people together. Develop a website to get the message out, "Weare, is a great place to live and work".

Mr. Sirek stressed that the economic development committee should keep it simple. Mr. Preece stressed the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission would be there to help and Ms Velasco also said the DRED could be tapped for assistance.

Mr. Butt shared that he had concerns and issues about how the economic development committee was functioning. Discussion followed about what has been done in the past and what needs to be done in the future. Mr. Butt mentioned that we need to promote business and the community, perhaps with a Virtual Tour and a kiosk at Bolton Field.

The next meeting of the Economic Development Committee will be December 16, 2008 at 7 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Heleen Kurk